

Key Factors for Selecting Aotearoa New Zealand Tertiary Education Providers: International Students' Perspectives

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<https://doi.org/10.34074/proc.2302011>

Abstract

The international education sector brings significant economic and human resource benefits to Aotearoa New Zealand. However, with changes to government immigration settings, overall international student numbers have started to wane since 2018, notwithstanding the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic since early 2020. The challenge for tertiary education providers is to develop improved positioning strategies to attract international students, irrespective of the more rigorous immigration settings. The aim of this study is to explore the key drivers affecting international students' choices of overseas study destination. Primary research by means of an online survey undertaken in mid-2019 sampled prospective international students (n = 296) deciding on a study destination based on a range of factors relating to the choice of tertiary education provision. The findings show that important factors for international students selecting Aotearoa New Zealand as an overseas study destination were "natural environment", "safety" and "lifestyle", while factors relating to the selection of tertiary education institutions were "location", "good graduate employment rate", "good academic reputation", "qualifications are well recognised by employers" and "internship and career support". The study results provide directions for tertiary education providers (universities, Te Pūkenga, PTEs) to develop improved positioning strategies for the international tertiary education marketplace.

Keywords: Tertiary education, study abroad, international students, international education

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This publication may be cited as:

Li, G., & Rajah, E. (2023). Key Factors for Selecting Aotearoa New Zealand Tertiary Education Providers: International Students' Perspectives. In J. L. Savage, J. Hoffman, & M. Shannon (Eds.). (2023). *Proceedings: ITP Research Symposium 2022, 30 November – 2 December* (pp. 107–118). ePress, Unitec | Te Pūkenga. <https://doi.org/10.34074/proc.2302011>

An ePress publication

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

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ISBN 978-1-99-118343-9